

Strategic requirements for plant conservation in the Arabian Peninsula

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Abstract. This paper briefly evaluates the activities of the Arabian Plant Specialist Group (APSG), which were initiated in response to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). For the Arabian Peninsula countries of Oman, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, substantial progress has been made towards meeting the 2010 targets of a regional plant checklist, an IUCN Red List and a programme of identifying and describing Important Plant Areas. A proposal to revise the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation for 2011-2020 is considered with respect to the strategic requirements for successfully implementing a revised strategy in the Arabian Region. Particular attention is paid to the development of online identification tools, to the widespread collection of biodiversity data and the education and training required for ensuring that conservation initiatives in the region are viable in the long term.

Key words. Plant conservation, Arabian Peninsula, Arabian Plant Specialist Group (APSG).

Introduction

In 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, a proposal for a consolidated update of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* (GSPC) was considered by the *Convention on Biological Diversity's* Scientific Subsidiary Body (SBSTTA) at its 14th meeting (10-21 May 2010). The SBSTTA assessed the proposed new targets and made recommendations to the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP), in Nagoya, Japan where the final version of the GSPC 2011-2020 text was decided.

Although the final version of the text is yet to be published, the proposal for a consolidated update of the GSPC 2011-2020 indicates largely that the progress milestones for the ambitious 2010 targets will be pushed back to 2020. The proposal draws attention to the fact that 'while significant progress has been made in implementing the Strategy at all levels, further work will be necessary in the period beyond 2010 to achieve the goals set out in the Strategy. [GSPC consolidated proposal available online at www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-14/official/sbstta-14-09-en.doc]. This work is set out in the 16 revised targets from 2011-2020. Due in part to the fact that much existing work has already gone into meeting these targets, many of the thresholds for levels of protection have also been increased e.g. Target 8 – 60% of plants conserved in *ex situ* collections is now 75% of plants conserved in *ex situ* collections.

During the 2005 meeting of the IUCN Arabian Plant Specialist Group (APSG) in Abu Dhabi, APSG members agreed on a 5 year plan aimed at meeting the 16 targets in the GSPC (Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity 2002) by 2010. In practice, these targets were to be achieved in the Arabian Peninsula by the following activities: